

Filed for intro on 03/23/95
House Bill _____
By _____

Senate No. SJR0138
By Rochelle

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Ben Johnson of
Lebanon on his exemplary service during World
War II.

WHEREAS, Ben Johnson is a true representative of the best traditions of the Volunteer State, a World War II hero, whose fierce loyalty to America never wavered as he nobly endured being a prisoner of war in Germany; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Johnson was born in Morgan County, the son of Mary Jane Herman and William Robert Johnson, on January 5, 1922. His maternal grandparents were Ella and Isaac Herman and his paternal grandparents were Ernestine and Melvin Johnson; and

WHEREAS, in October 1942, he was drafted and inducted into the Army at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, then shipped to Camp Atterburg, Indiana for basic training. He was part of the 83rd Infantry Division having been placed in the Medical Department of the 2nd Battalion, 330th Regiment; and

WHEREAS, following basic training, he and his division participated in the 2nd Army Maneuvers during July and August of 1943 in and around Lebanon; and

WHEREAS, after finishing maneuvers, he was sent to Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky for seven more months of training. In March 1944, a troop train carried him to Camp Shanks, New York, and on April 16, 1944, debarked in Liverpool, England; and

WHEREAS, his unit entered combat on June 17, 1944; and on July 8, 1944, he and his unit were captured by the enemy near Carantan, France following a lost battle with a German patrol. He was forced to march 70 miles back into enemy territory with little or no food and water; and

WHEREAS, by September 1944, he had ridden in small box cars, measuring 8' X 20', more than 500 miles and arrived at Stalag IV-B in Muhlberg, Germany only 125 miles from the Polish border. By this time, he had lost 30 pounds, and the diet of bread and soup or one boiled potato had taken its toll on him; and

WHEREAS, around October 1944, the Germans pulled him from a group of ten medics and sent him to various labor camps throughout southeastern Germany. He was able to perform the duties of a medic and administer first aid to the American P.O.W.'s that were laboring on railroads, bridges and tunnels that were damaged by Allied bombing; and

WHEREAS, during his internment, he was in seven different labor camps doing what he could with the few medical supplies the Germans could provide: bandages, tape, antiseptic and aspirin. His final assignment was in Mehlteuer, only 30 miles from the Czechoslovakian border; and

WHEREAS, on April 16, 1945, he was liberated by the advancing American forces and shuttled back into Allied control. By the end of the war he was resting in the Port of Le Havre, France awaiting shipment to the United States. After recuperating in Miami Beach, Florida, he was shipped to Billings General Hospital in Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, where he was discharged in November 1945; and

WHEREAS, he was next employed with Precision Rubber Products in Dayton, Ohio, who transferred him to their Lebanon plant facilities in September 1963. After retirement in 1979, he chose to stay in Tennessee with his wife, two daughters and four grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Ben continues to participate in activities involving veterans of W.W.II. He regularly takes part in organized events involving former prisoners of war, and he is also a very prolific writer and speaker. He is one of the most active members of the World War II Tennessee Maneuvers Advisory Council and assists the state commission on a frequent basis in telling the W.W.II story. As of this date he has written, and published a detailed, eight-part account of his experiences in the war and especially his experience as a P.O.W.; and

WHEREAS, Ben Johnson is a devout member of the Baptist faith; and

WHEREAS, he is a devoted husband to his charming wife Patricia and they are blessed with two successful children: Victoria Lynn Johnson Eade and Kimberly Ann Johnson Alley, and four grandchildren: Regina Lynn Putnam, Monica Lynn Eade, Terry Keith Eade and Brian Mitchell Alley; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we recognize the service of Ben Johnson to his country, his state and to veterans; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor and commend Ben Johnson and, on behalf of the countless veterans who have benefited significantly from his tireless efforts, thank him.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.

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